THE

Commonweal

Desegregation

PATTERN FOR PROGRESS

by John LaFarge

Is Britain Declining?

DEATH OF A MYTH

by J. L. Benvenisti

The Redefection Campaign

FUGITIVES FROM THE SOVIET

by William J. Donovan

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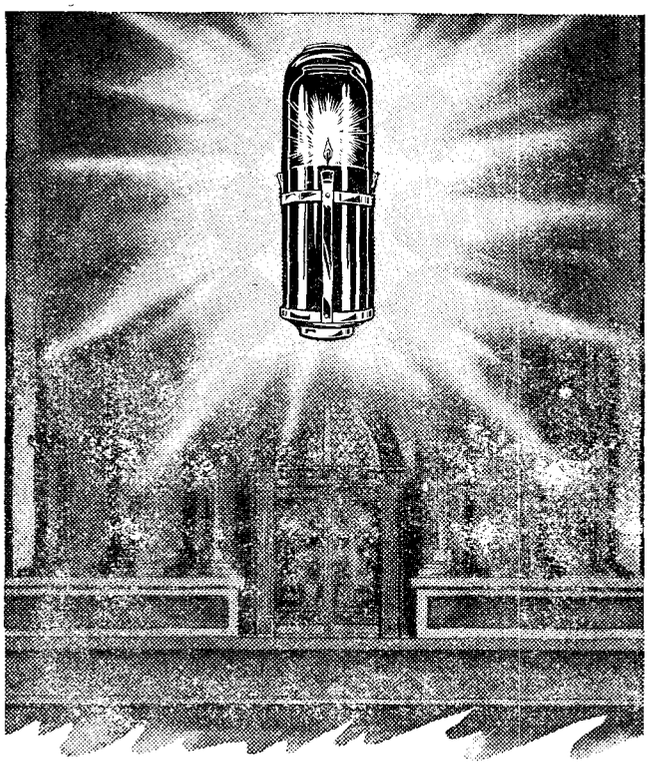

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THE
Commonweal
A Weekly Review of Public Affairs, Literature, and the Arts
THIRTY-SECOND YEAR OF PUBLICATION

week by week

BASES IN A DIVIDED WORLD

THERE IS a distinction between maintaining a colony on a foreign terrain for general economic, political and military purposes and operating a smaller military, naval and air base overseas. The differences involved are not all favorable to the populace living in the vicinity of a base, however. There is always the possibility of an attack. It is hardly surprising, in any case, that the wave of anti-colonialism that is sweeping the Afro-Asian world is beating against a number of foreign bases.

To what extent does the overseas base present a special facet of the crucial colonial problem? Britain's remaining overseas bases are last outposts of empire to which she is determinedly hanging on. The stakes she seeks to defend in the Far East—partly through bases at Singapore and Hong Kong—appear to be of lesser moment than the oil resources of the Middle East; yet rubber and other vital raw materials are of great consequence to the desperate British economy.

Gibraltar, Malta, Cyprus and Aden are outposts from the old lifeline to the East which has been greatly weakened by evacuation of Suez. If they were to go, however, particularly as the Soviets push their economic and political penetration deeper and deeper into the Middle East and Africa, vast strategic supplies of oil would be stripped of important defenses. The common good in this instance involves considerably more than the "legitimate aspirations" of local colonial peoples.

Most of the hundred and more American overseas bases are comparatively recent. Their objective has been considerably more specific. Defense of Europe from further Soviet expansion led to a string of airbases from Iceland to Morocco where medium bombers equipped with atom bombs could stand poised for immediate retaliation to a Soviet attack. Our bases from Japan south to the Philippines have a somewhat similar function, although it is Communist China that looms up as the threatening adversary in the Far East.

A GREAT variety of situations confronts the Americans who man the bases in various lands. Relations appear best in France and Britain; in Germany, where shiny "little America" communities for base personnel and their families are most completely worlds unto themselves, local Germans often indulge in hostile stares; GI's and their wives seek to be as inconspicuous as possible.

In Morocco, before independence was achieved, the French long feared the effect of the American presence—the higher wage scales, our anti-colonial tradition and the rest. At the moment American bases there lack authorized status; the native Moroccan authorities are not hostile, while the revenues resulting from the American bases will bolster a sagging national economy. But relations have to be formalized. The Sultan wants to see the text of the secret Franco-American agreement whereby the four bases were established and then to negotiate new arrangements under new terms. Few governments set greater store by their prerogatives than those which have just achieved independence.

So far, generally, the United States has had much less difficulty over aspirations to nationhood than Great Britain. Certain important difficulties might be ironed out if the NATO powers were to act together. French compliance on the divulging of that Morocco treaty text is one instance. Iceland provides another. Back of national pressure against the continuance of our base there is the Soviet Union, which by supplying a big market for Iceland's fish has stepped into the breach opened up

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by a four-year British embargo. If in the wider interest Britain should relent and resume her purchases, Soviet economic pressure would lose effectiveness.

Other possibilities for NATO cooperation are represented by the embattled island of Cyprus. It was suggested months ago that Britain need not hold onto the whole island against the wish of a growing majority, but only her two bases, the second of which has yet to be completed. If Cyprus were granted independence with the understanding that the island, or Greece if union is effected, would lease the two areas as NATO bases, then even Turkey might feel assured for its minority on the island because of the presence there of Allied forces. Here the difficult goal of granting national sovereignty and yet retaining important anti-Soviet defenses would be the object. It appears to suggest the only possible way out, as the Greek majority on the island of Cyprus grows increasingly determined to achieve independence.

This is a formula which might be adapted for varying conditions in territories where national aspirations conflict with the maintenance of bases vital to the defenses of the Allied world. In time it might even be broadened on a UN basis. Certain bases will tend to lose strategic importance as inter-continental bombers and missiles of unprecedented destructive power become actualities. Under more peaceful circumstances their role would greatly decline. At the moment, however, they are of key importance. The fact that they are so far-flung constitutes a genuine obstacle to crippling surprise attack. Moreover, as the range of potential attacking planes and missiles widens, there is need for detection stations farther and farther out. Overseas bases are still essential.

NEXT WEEK

MICHAEL P. FOGARTY discusses realism and American foreign policy.

"Am I being naive, or have the realists not fallen over backwards in their efforts not to look like Woodrow Wilson? I grant, certainly, that there are times and places when defense against the enemy is the only thing that matters. . . . But the whole point of the New Look in Soviet policy is surely that at this time the danger of war has moved one step backwards, so that room is left to consider other interests as well as those of bare survival."

TIME AND THE CATHOLIC PRESS

NONE OF the editors of The Commonweal was able to get to Dallas for the recent convention of the Catholic Press Association, but the report on the affair in *Time* for May 28 makes cheerful reading. The account in *Time's* Press Section not only cites the generally improving standards in the Catholic press, but deals with what has long been a key question: "the widespread confusion over whether the Catholic press, on such problems as U.S. foreign policy, immigration or 'right to work' legislation, speaks with the voice of the Church. . . ."

There is no doubt that the "official" tag in diocesan papers is confusing. Many people regard support for the Bricker Amendment or the entire McCarthy-Jenner branch of right-wing politics as being somehow or other an "official" Catholic position, simply because such views consistently appear in certain "official" diocesan papers. This is not the case, of course, and it is good that *Time* reports this fact for its readers, noting that "many a thoughtful Catholic editor" wishes his readers would stop considering his editorial view as the "official Catholic opinion." Good examples cited by *Time* are diocesan papers like the Boston *Pilot* and the *Indiana Catholic and Record,* which take pains to distinguish between official pronouncements and the opinions of the editors. Such a distinction is vitally necessary.

Time ends its story by quoting Father Thurston Davis, S.J., of *America,* who said at the Dallas convention:

"Catholics, of course, think and judge alike on matters of faith and morality. But on all other matters, usually of a social, economic or cultural nature, in which the Church has taken no authoritative position, she can be said not only to tolerate debate, but actually to encourage and urge it. The fact that we see eye to eye on the mysteries of the Incarnation, the Redemption and the Divine Trinity does not make it any easier—or, for that matter, even necessary—that we all nod our heads together when someone mentions the Bricker Amendment, fluoridation of water, or the merger of the C.I.O. and A.F.L."

We agree heartily with Father Davis. Far too many people still equate diversity of opinion with heresy, as our mail testifies at regular intervals. We hope discussion of this matter will not end here, and that Catholic editors who still leave their readers hazy on this point will think seriously about changing their policy.

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POLITICAL CRITICS OF ART

THE UNITED STATES Information Agency has canceled plans to send overseas a modern art exhibit which depicts scenes from American sports. The cancellation followed a criticism by the Dallas County Patriotic Council which charged that four artists whose work appeared in the show had belonged to Communist-front groups. Col. Alvin M. Owsley, spokesman for the Council, explained that "it is one of the basic premises of Communist doctrine that art can and should be used in the constant process of attempting to brainwash and create public attitudes that are soft towards Communism." For Col. Owsley it followed, as the night the day, that the show should be stopped, that the accused artists should have their work banned. The cancellation thus becomes one more item in the fascinating history of the relation between politics and art in our time.

It is no longer uncommon for many persons who have shown little concern for art, who have been content to let it go its own untrammeled way, to announce a sudden and intense interest in it. These new-born critics want to guide art from its erring path—or to stop it entirely.

These persons tell us, sometimes unwittingly, but always with an engaging simplicity, how they have come to be elevated to the role of art critic. They have not found it necessary to submit themselves to training in order to refine their taste and judgment. Nor have they struggled to realize the principles of art theory and practice. Such procedures are too time-consuming and arduous and they are, at best, uncertain. They lead to judgments that are open to question and discussion.

The more certain way is to start with pure political convictions. These, we are told, provide the basic principles for judging artistic works. Thus, in America, not only present Communists but all those who once belonged to front groups are politically suspect. Their work, it is assumed, must express their political convictions. The conclusion is inescapable: their work is bad and must be banned.

This line of reasoning is so simple that it could be dismissed as ludicrous if it were not for two important facts. The first is that our political unrest allows these new critics to be effective. The present exhibit, for instance, would have seemed to be free from political criticism. Entitled "Sport in Art," the exhibit was arranged by the American Federation of Art, long respected as an art organization. It had been selected by the Information Agency to be sent to Australia in connection with the coming Olympic games. And it had been touring the United States under the sponsorship of a magazine published by Time, Inc. Further, Ben Shahn, one of the artists attacked by the Texas patriots, does occasional covers for *Time* magazine. Yet the Dallas protest, the sole criticism leveled at the exhibit, will evidently keep it from showing in Australia.

The second important fact is that such actions, the criticism and the cancellation, form part of a pattern which is found in all countries undergoing the political strains of our time. Political principles quite extrinsic to the work of art are used as necessary and sufficient grounds for judging the work. In Fascist Germany those works which did not declare the dominance of the master-race were ill-judged, and the work of Jews was naturally suspect. In Russia, art was to express the values of Communism and the socialistic society. Artistic works which drew too heavily upon Western inspiration were denounced as works of a decadent, bourgeois society and declared valueless. In America we now have the professional American Patriots—although the term demeans each word—who want art to be true to what they consider American principles. If it does not conform, it is condemned.

To oppose such principles is not to deny that a man's beliefs will affect his art. Just as there is a relation between a critic and his judgment, so there is a relation between the artist and his work. But this relation is profound and subtle; it is complex beyond the suspicion of the political critics. It may be too much to expect sudden humility on the part of those who, immoderate in their patriotic zeal, have so readily condemned American artists and their work. But we must not accompany them in their actions. That way madness lies.

QUESTION AND ANSWER

TWO RECENT items in the New York *Times*, interesting in themselves, are more interesting if juxtaposed. The first item concerns Eugene Dennis, general secretary of the American Communist Party, who shared a non-Communist public forum with pacifists and Socialists. After Mr. Dennis had completed the now familiar confession of Stalinist errors and after he gave advice to American voters, Norman Thomas asked him several pointed questions. One of these was, "Will it [the Communist Party] urge Communist regimes to end one-party rule and to rehabilitate political prisoners?" Mr. Dennis gave no satisfactory response.

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The other item is a dispatch from Paris where a correspondent reported an incident of the recent Party Congress in Moscow. Four academicians handed to the Central Committee a memorandum asking for a "second party" in order to prevent a new "cult of personality." The four men were immediately read out of the Communist Party. This would seem to provide the answer that Mr. Dennis did not care to give.

STATE CENSORSHIP

MONSIGNOR Thomas F. Little, executive secretary of the National Legion of Decency, has recently voiced a distrust of state censorship as an effective means of insuring the moral acceptability of films. He declared that "state censor boards and police action have, perhaps, kept from the screen the baser pornographies, but they have been in nowise the agents of preserving proper moral standards in entertainment motion pictures."

We sincerely hope that Monsignor Little's distrust of state censorship will spread to certain sections of the Catholic Press and help to modify their present view of both the desirability and effectiveness of state censorship. When the Supreme Court some months ago brought into question the very constitutionality of prior censorship of films, many Catholic editorialists viewed the action of the Court as "opening the floodgates of filth" and "aiding the enemies of morality." Such confidence in state censorship is sadly misplaced.

One of the radical difficulties with state censorship in the area of morality is that the state wields a power which it does not fully understand. No matter how well-intentioned a censorship law may be, it has to be applied, and the crux of the matter is that the person who must apply the law is frequently not too well qualified to pass accurate moral judgments.

In the case of obscene literature, for example, responsibility for upholding federal, state or local laws prohibiting obscene literature falls on such officials as postmasters, mayors and the policeman on the beat. There is such a thing as obscenity, as everyone knows, and what Monsignor Little calls the "baser pornographies" are usually recognizable without too much difficulty. There is, however, a large area of uncertainty once we pass beyond the baser, obvious examples of obscenity, and in this uncertain area the postmaster, mayor and policeman as such are no better equipped than the butcher and baker to make precise moral judgments.

For this reason, if for no other, state censorship should be kept to the necessary minimum of outlawing the obviously obscene, and even this minimal legislation should be regarded as secondary in the creation of a moral climate.

EXECUTIVE SUITE

AT A RECENT press conference President Eisenhower, in discussing two separate situations, indicated a kind of "open door policy" in conducting the affairs of his office.

He was asked by a reporter if he would make an appointment to see former Senator Harry P. Cain, who had recently stated that he had been trying, unsuccessfully, to present directly to the President his views on the injustices and shortcomings of the government's employee security program. To the reporter's forty-two word question the President replied simply, "Yes."

In reply to a question about his attitude toward a meeting of Southern governors to discuss ways and means to carry out integration in the public schools, Mr. Eisenhower replied that he had no intention of calling such a meeting, but added, "I am ready to confer with anybody on this problem who wants to come in and see me."

There is a certain attractiveness in this picture of the President's easy availability to Senator Cain and assorted Southern governors; but the picture also has its disturbing overtones.

Senator Cain has been for several years the most articulate critic of abuses in the security program and the most effective advocate of changes in it. It is rather unusual for a reporter to ask whether such an official of the Administration could have an appointment with the President. For two years the issue of segregation in public schools has inflamed more passions and posed more questions than has any other political event of the last decade. This seems to be a situation which calls for leadership rather than availability on the part of the President. And the fact is that the door opens only when a button is pushed. When Ambassador Bohlen flew back to report his views on the recent profound changes within Russia and the satellites, he could not see the President for several days, and his conference with him lasted only twenty minutes.

Incidents like these characterize the Eisenhower years. History is in a hurry, but the Administration is not. On issue after issue it has failed to show that sense of urgency demanded by most of our pressing national problems.

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Pattern for Progress

"ARE THE FANATICAL RACISTS TO BE ALLOWED TO PARALYZE ANY DISCUSSION WHICH THEY DO NOT DOMINATE?"

JOHN LA FARGE

RECENTLY, W. H. Auden wrote some verses about a senseless catadupe roaring endlessly to a stone-deaf stone. It would be too bad if the discussion between those who argue for and those who argue against the implementation of the Supreme Court's decision outlawing racial segregation in the nation's schools were to degenerate into a hopeless matching of fears.

White people of the deep South are in terror of what would happen if the Negro majority in their midst were given equal rights. Negroes are alarmed over the sudden outbursts of racial truculence. People everywhere are worried about what scared people can do to the rest of us, for a frightened man, like a frightened animal, can inflict a lot of damage. The readiness of old pro's in the hate-line to horn into the dispute is extremely menacing, for hate is highly contagious. Communists profit at home and abroad by any altercations.

Another source of anxiety is the steady advance in local political power by intransigent elements in the white South—those of the rural type—while in addition the South's political power is exerted not upon the South alone but through Washington, to a considerable extent, upon the nation at large. If the South is extremely sensitive about the rest of the country's telling Dixie citizens how to behave, people outside the South resent certain controls Southern politicians exert on national affairs, as, for instance, through their firm hold on Congressional committees and through filibusters. No region is an island.

But is such a hopeless dispute entirely necessary? A very different type of dialogue, one cool and reasoned, is in fact being carried out in increasingly numerous localities all through the South, although under heavy wraps from the pressure of public opinion.

Can the wraps be removed? Can the terms of the discussion be rendered less extreme and yet be faithful to the principles of right and justice, which the nation as a whole supports? Are the fanatical racists to be allowed to paralyze any discussion which they do not dominate? I believe at least one suggestion may help to clear the air.

MUCH of the present impasse is caused by the confusion that inevitably occurs when desegregation and integration, two distinct elements in the case, are treated as if they were identical or, to be more precise, when we act as if the scrapping of segregation as a working social policy meant necessarily the immediate adoption of full-fledged integration. By the same token much confusion might be avoided through a quite different approach to each of these two generally correlative but by no means identical concepts. Such a proposal will not placate fanatical white supremacists, who have tasted blood and are on the rampage. It is aimed rather at the great numbers of those who do not share such extreme views, who are sincerely concerned for the common good.

This means that we start everywhere, as has already been started in a considerable number of Southern localities, by an immediate general repudiation of the institutionalized policy which we call racial segregation. Practically speaking, all influential and important elements would thus openly recognize what a very considerable proportion of Southerners in their own hearts do recognize, though their natural fears prevent their expressing their sentiments openly, namely, that compulsory racial segregation has proved itself to be a blind alley: a policy which leads nowhere. It becomes ever more difficult to cling to a practice that is contrary to the spirit and letter of our democracy, to the highest law of the land and to our Christian teaching. As Archbishop Owen McCann of Capetown, South Africa, observed in his April 14 statement on the Government's proposals for segregating Bantu natives—and he was dealing with a much tougher situation than any in the United States—"The ultimate aim of any governmental action here should be the development of all members of the community. Any plan to keep any section of the community in an essentially inferior position is therefore wrong."

Father John LaFarge, S. J., associate editor of *America*, is the author of *Interracial Justice, The Race Question And The Negro, No Postponement,* and *The Manner Is Ordinary.*

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Politically, segregation may have fewer friends than is supposed. "Most intelligent Southerners," said George C. Biggers, Atlanta newspaper publisher at the recent Press Week in New York, "are reconciled to the feeling that on segregation they haven't much to look to in either party." Though under certain circumstances this social instrument has been used with moderation, the conditions of our present epoch and segregation's natural evolution have made it an instrument of grave injustice and a generator of racial hate.

Such a repudiation, as I have just indicated, need not imply an unduly harsh judgment on the past. We do not need to minimize the vast amount of good that has been done by people of both races to advance the American Negro socially, culturally and religiously, even while yet conforming to the segregated system. Whatever the system's rights or wrongs, such conformity was often the only way that friends of the Negro people could secure for them any tangible benefits, and these benefits often represented real gains.

But times have changed. Certainly the South, including the political South, has long since abandoned any notion that a Negro cannot or should not be educated. In like manner the immense changes of recent times, which include the South's rapid industrialization, and the incidents and consequences of World War II, have brought to light a swarm of acute contradictions inherent in the complicated network of restraints aimed at preserving white supremacy. So I hazard the guess that far fewer Southerners than is imagined are completely sold on compulsory racial segregation as a principle *if* some other way can be found to adjust race relationships that is more in harmony with our spiritual and political ideals. (I am not talking, of course, about professional diehards and traders in race antagonisms.) But they would expect that such a repudiation should not bring them immediately and uncompromisingly face to face with integration. In point of fact, the Supreme Court simply asked us to repudiate segregation; it did not impose any blueprint for integration.

Repudiation of segregation as a policy is of itself not a solution of the racial problem. It is simply a necessary *condition* for a solution. When you reverse your car and decide not to drive down a dead-end street, your journey still lies ahead of you; it may be a long and difficult journey, but you have definitely learned that that particular route gets you nowhere, especially if, as in this case, the dead end leads into a morass.

WHERE, then, do we go from here? Such a question opens up the whole wide area of building better race relations in the local community on the basis of mutual consent and total reality. It means considering all the factors involved, moral principle, common interests, universal fairness, valid traditions, stubborn psychological data. It means a long-term, cautious, patient and imaginative, thoroughly Christian approach.

In many cases immediate integration is already found to be the answer, as is shown by such detailed objective studies as the New York *Times'* "Report on the South" for March 13, 1956. And in many other localities it may soon be accepted despite present opposition. Undoubtedly all the schools will come to it in the end. But quite irrespective of the complex issue of how to make any kind of integration work, the immediate, cogent and tangible question is: *How shall we make desegregation work?* What are now the facts, the full facts, the hard unpleasant facts and the encouraging, hopeful facts on which we can build at least a *modus vivendi* with germs of greater hope for the future? Certainly nobody will want to destroy any good already achieved under existing bi-racial patterns.

IT MAY be helpful to apply the idea of this present proposal to a concrete situation: that of the inequality of the two races as seen in the case of retarded Negro children coming to an integrated from a segregated school. Judging from the experience of already integrated schools around the country, a lot of the alleged difficulties from this source appear to be mythical. Thomas A. Van Sant, Director of the Division of Adult Education for the Baltimore Board of Education, recently declared that mixed schools in Baltimore had not "pulled down the white children." Tests show that Negroes tended to have lower ratings in aptitude than whites, the educator said, but this was attributable to their lower social and economic background.

It is unreal to ignore the facts of retardation whenever they occur, but it is also unreal and quite illogical to try to concoct, as some have done, an argument against desegregation derived from integration's particular woes. The argument backfires. The retardation afflicting these children is precisely segregation's effect, a demonstration of its wrongness as a policy, just as the violent outbursts that have attended the Supreme Court's decision are themselves rather a *prima facie* indication of the vested interests which segregation protects. Retardation is the fruit of the segregated schools.

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Discussing the schools of the District of Columbia in the New York *Times*' "Report on the South," Luther A. Huston remarks:

"Dr. Margaret J. Butcher, a Negro member of the Board of Education and a teacher at Howard University, said that Negro children in the District schools frequently 'do not perform at the same levels as their white contemporaries.' She maintained, however, that this was the 'cumulative' result of instruction in obsolete schools of the pre-integration era and 'not because of any lack of ability to learn' . . . .

"The white principal of the high school with more than 1,100 students, about equally divided between the races, said that the educational deficiencies of Negroes arose mainly from the lack of proper teaching in the segregated schools. He thinks that eventually the Negroes will catch up, but it will take a few years."

It would be easy to multiply such testimony. All of it points clearly to a plain conclusion: the job at hand is not to keep worsening the situation by adhering to a policy which is at the root of any present defective performance but to open the path to a genuine equalization by getting rid once and for all of the very policy that has brought such deficiencies about.

In 1896 when the U.S. Supreme Court in the *Plessy vs. Ferguson* decision consecrated the segregation system by enunciating the doctrine of "separate but equal," a great many educators in the North as well as in the South thought a magic formula had been discovered. Negro education would flourish and schools as a whole would prosper. And Negro education did make no small progress under that formula in times very different from the present and with the aid of incredible, dogged perseverance on the part of the Negroes themselves. Nevertheless, Negro education has remained gravely retarded.

In the words of Dr. Ambrose Caliver, Assistant to the Commissioner and Chief of the Adult Education Section, U.S. Office of Education, Washington, D.C., progress was "absolute" rather than "relative." While Negroes advance from year to year, straining every effort, in the words of Professor John Hope Franklin of Brooklyn College, "to make even the slightest crack in the formidable wall of segregation," the gap between Negroes and whites remained about the same, or in some instances became wider.

"In North Carolina, for instance," says Dr. Caliver, "beginning with the late 'thirties the differential decreased progressively to 1952 when North Carolina spent an average of $186.30 for each white, and $149.60 for each Negro child. Alabama presents a similar pattern, although more unfavorable . . . The figures do not differ greatly for other Southern states: some are worse, a few are better. . . . In practically all Southern states there have been until recently glaring inequalities in the amounts received by Negroes from most of the Federal funds appropriated annually for education research. The Federal funds are distributed equally among the states. In general the state funds are also distributed equally among the local administrative units. But discrimination has occurred in the distribution within the local administrative unit." (*Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science,* March, 1956.)

According to Harry F. Ashmore (*The Negro in the South.* University of North Carolina Press, 1954): "These internal deficiencies of the Southern educational system as measured in the gaps between facilities available to white and Negro and urban and rural children contribute heavily to the disparity between the region's schools and those of the rest of the nation . . . For many years Southerners have demonstrated their faith [in education] by spending a larger proportion of their total personal income for education than has the rest of the nation; in the last year of record the proportion stood at 3.3 in the South against 2.7 per cent for the non-South."

Are the economic obstacles so great that the white and Negro schools could conceivably be equalized without bringing financial ruin to the South?

Mr. Ashmore conjectures that the maintenance of a segregated dual system will not entail any notably greater expense in the Southern states for a while than would the desegregated schools, but he is certain that after a few years, in line with current educational developments, the cost of the dual system would be prohibitive. The immediate practical point is, that, desegregated or not, the various states must still continue to shoulder a heavy burden of striving to equalize Negro and white in rural and urban schools. Judging by the large differentials that still remain between white and Negro education in the region the job is still enormous, despite accelerated efforts. But where Negroes are a large proportion of the population there will certainly be more hope for making at least an approximation to this goal with the advantage of their willing cooperation than by persistently maintaining an institution which in steadily increasing numbers the Negroes in their hearts detest. Such inward detestation, incidentally, is quite compatible for a while with considerable outward accommodation to long-accustomed social patterns.

WHY, THEN, is it not possible to abandon the quixotic attempt to defeat the inescapable and so to turn the full stream of the South's intelligence, energy and latent good will into the real task that lies ahead? This means, in Ashmore's words, and those of the New York *Times*' report, that "the new patterns will have to be hammered out across the table in thousands of scattered school districts and they will have to

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be shaped to accommodate not only the needs but the prejudices of whites and Negroes to whom these problems are not abstractions but the daily essence of their lives." Denunciation of compulsory segregation "would not in itself," says Ashmore, "bring about any great shift in Southern attitudes, nor even any far-reaching changes in the pattern of bi-racial education, but it would re-define the goal the Southern people, white and Negro, are committed to seek in the way of democracy."

In some localities this pattern of segregation may by mutual consent persist for some time. In others it will be rapidly abandoned. That is a matter for the interested parties to work out for themselves. The crucial determinant is the *spirit* in which that mutual consent is sought and obtained. The signpost for intelligent people to follow is not one pointing more deeply into the morass but one which clearly beckons to the solid ground ahead, one which sets all hands manfully to work in order to repair the damage that a wrong policy has inflicted.

WITH THIS regional "peculiar institution" out of the way, we can approach the problem of racial retardation and racial differences on the only basis upon which it can be honestly and effectively handled, namely, as a national problem. It faces us just as much in New York, Chicago, Detroit or Portland, Oregon as in the depths of Mississippi or Alabama. Let each locality work out its own solution but let all be united by a common interest and a common hope.

Could we come to this general understanding in the five months still left between now and November? The 100 Southern members of Congress, in their joint manifesto on March 11 of this year, expressed a readiness to avoid extremism and to discuss their problem in terms of law and reason, even though they declared war on desegregation and damned the Supreme Court. Here would seem to be the concrete, effective answer to their challenge.

If such an understanding could be reached, some roaring of oratorical cataracts might be muted in the impending campaign. More life-giving energy could be released pointing to real and lasting solutions instead of being consumed by striving for merely regional triumphs. The forces even of a militant organization like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People could be channeled into the mainstream of effort for a new and better South and new and better nation instead of being obliged, as at present, to concentrate upon the wearisome task of winning by hard legal battles that freedom from coercive legislation which is the birthright of every American.

I believe, and I am not alone in so believing, that such a simple position, starting with desegregation and working from there out, is one which the nation's great leaders, political, social, economic and educational, may all be coming to at some not too remote future time, as indeed many of the country's religious leaders have come to it already. The pull of forces tending that way is irresistible. How much damage could be spared, how much common ground gained if all of these leaders could reach this agreement now.

"IS BRITAIN DECLINING?"

Death of a Myth

J. L. BENVENISTI

A SHORT time ago, Air Chief Marshal Sir Philip Joubert published an article in a Sunday paper which was, to say the least, somewhat startling. Sir Philip alleged that a marked decline had taken place in the morale and discipline of the British armed forces, and he listed, as chief among the causes of this, the growing practice of granting commissions from the ranks—instead of, as once, reserving them for members of the upper social strata.

"So long," he said, "as officers came from homes about which there was an atmosphere of the unknown —'Out of our class, chum'—so long did they have that little something that inspired not only the respect but to a certain extent the awe of their men. As soon as they came from the same class—'I know him, Johnnie. His father kept a grocer's shop in our street'—then, however good they may have been at their job, they lacked this quality, this mystery that enveloped their predecessors."

What will become of us if senior officers and other highly placed persons are going to let the cat out of the bag like this I shudder to imagine, for the im-

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plications of Sir Philip's remarks are quite unmistakable. It is that there really never was any superior wisdom or virtue in the British governing class, there was only the mystery of being different, and that mystery reposed in the last resort simply on the fact of having had over a certain period of time a great deal more money. Nevertheless, the fact of this difference was able to create a very effective myth, a myth which was in point of fact powerful enough not merely to maintain discipline among the armed forces but to keep the whole British social structure relatively stable for a period of some two hundred years. Over that period, indeed, the British may be said to have been governed by myth—or, if you prefer a coarser word, by humbug.

Now there is no particular harm in that. The element of myth has its part to play in the life of every vigorous nation, and this particular myth of the wisdom and virtue of the governing class was quite as satisfying to the humbler orders of society as it was to the sons of privilege. That is how an aristocracy works.

The trouble about any myth, however, is that sooner or later it is liable to break down, especially in a free society. Sooner or later, somebody plays the part of the little boy in Hans Andersen's fairy tale and cries out that the king is stark naked. That, of course, is precisely what Sir Philip has unwittingly done on the present occasion, though it must be admitted that he has not really done more than give a new twist to a debunking process that has been going on ever since the end of World War I. And the process, on the whole, has been a salutary one; certainly, the air has been cleansed of a great deal of bunkum, and the world has become in consequence a cleaner and brighter place.

SUCH CLEANLINESS, however, exacts its price. The fact is that the problem is by no means a simple one, though the very blatancy of much of the claptrap that the great British myth has generated may sometimes have caused us to think that there was nothing more than claptrap involved. So many self-satisfied bores, for instance, kept telling us that England was a country that had to be governed by gentlemen that we lost sight of how much truth there was buried in the statement, that is, to what extent the aristocratic myth had provided an extraordinarily serviceable instrument—and in particular an extraordinarily serviceable military instrument—for achieving certain results. This was true both in the domestic and the imperial field. So many empty-headed snobs had spoken of "Pukka Sahibs," "lesser breeds without the law" and had so insistently repeated the rest of the Kiplingese Abracadabra that people lost sight of the truth that the Pax Britannica, a thing profoundly dependent on the aristocratic social structure, and so on the aristocratic myth, was a great civilizing reality.

I say that the Pax Britannica was profoundly dependent upon the aristocratic myth, and I think that is undeniable. Only thus could the type of British Proconsul acquire the nimbus that enabled him to exercise his authority with the absolute minimum of

force, and the same principle was at work in the small, cheap and efficient armies of "blackguards led by gentlemen" that policed the frontiers, to say nothing of the native troops and their divinely remote British officers. The prestige of the white man was intimately connected with the prestige of a white governing class.

Today all that belongs to the past; the sustaining myth has been, it seems, irrevocably shattered. The question is whether along with the undoubted gain caused by its disappearance—for a move towards intellectual honesty must always have about it an element of gain—the losses may not be greater than we suppose. For the myth and all that appertains to it is now so widely scorned that even valid lines of argument are dismissed without a hearing merely because they seem indirectly to recall it. In this matter we are, indeed, in the position of a peddler of phony oil stock who suddenly finds that there really is oil in one of his wells and does not quite know what to do about it. That is at least part of the reason why the British have retreated from position to position, including some positions from which they should never have retreated at all—and that is the reason why we are in our present abominable position on the island of Cyprus.

WHAT really triggered off the whole Cypriot independence movement, which till then had never been a major issue—or at any rate what brought it to its present alarming dimensions and gave it its present violent character—was the British retreat from Suez. The Cypriots refused to accept British rule any longer because they sensed that the British were no longer certain of themselves, that in point of fact they were no longer convinced by their own myth. The result is that the British are now in the intolerable position of standing before the world as stranglers

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of freedom, and there seems to be very little that they can do about it. If they are not to surrender this immensely important strategic island—and in my opinion it is in the interests of the whole free world (to say nothing of the Turkish minority) that they should continue in effective control of it for a very long time to come—they must obviously, as things have now developed, put up some sort of a show of force, and that means raids, searches, dispersal of crowds and all the rest of the nauseating business.

There is now a natural tendency to try and search out the precise point where the whole sorry business began, and I myself have little doubt. I believe that where the British first really went wrong was when they surrendered the Suez Canal. That was the effective beginning of all our troubles in the Middle East, the Pan-Arab movement in its present aggressive form, the threat to Israel and the rest of it. It may, of course, be claimed that the British left Suez under compulsion, that they had decided it was too dangerous, even impossible, to continue their resistance to insurgent Egyptian nationalism. That may be so, but it is certainly not the whole story. I think there were hidden and more subtle reasons.

There were the British at the crucial point of the earth's surface, the Suez, a point that is both a vital artery and a vital barrier. There they were, in just one of those dramatically charged situations in which they were so fond of representing themselves. They were the lone wardens of the marches, the sentries on Hadrian's wall, the faithful and patient watchers at the outposts of civilization. It was magnificent—but that was just the trouble. It suddenly was—or seemed—just a little too good to be true.

I do not think that the British were particularly frightened of the Egyptians; what they were frightened of was their own drama, their own particular kind of drama, which they suddenly suspected of being phony when, as a matter of fact, it was nothing of the kind. At the moment when it had become quite an appreciable reality, the British had lost confidence in their myth.

A VIGOROUS nation cannot live without a myth of some kind. It needs some sort of emotionally charged, self-dramatizing idea to carry it forward, and when one such myth is shattered, it must of necessity find another. Over the past decade or so the British have started to do this, and they have developed their new myth around the idea of social justice. One really has to live in Britain to know how strongly this idea has got hold of them, how powerful and—for the time being at least—how effective is the determination to wipe the more degrading forms of poverty right out of existence and to secure for every human being, as a right, the essential minimum of physical well being. Britain really does feel she is leading the world in extending social justice to all.

But, although it is true that no vigorous nation can live without this element of self-dramatization which I have called its myth, nevertheless the mere existence of a myth is far from being by itself a proof of vigor. The myth must be, to some extent at least, anchored in reality. The old myth of the Pax Britannica and the aristocratic social structure did possess this quality. Whether he governed ill or well, the aristocrat did at least govern. Even if British rule in India was not the unmixed blessing that some people supposed, there was never any doubt that the British ruled India, doing so on a basis of tenuous but real material power. The whole complex, in short, was a viable reality.

The foundations of our welfare state are at the moment more precarious. Britain's share of world trade is growing slowly smaller, and our dense population would not be able to maintain itself, were it not for our remaining investments overseas and the tin, oil, and rubber which they produce. Those investments may or may not last a long time yet, but it is not in the nature of things that they should last forever. Yet it seems to me that too many people here still regard the resources which they provide, and on which the welfare state reposes, as part of some eternal order and talk as though the only problem before us was that of their more equitable distribution.

It should surely be plain that, whatever may be true in the short run, in the long run we can only hope to realize this dream of social justice by the most rigid self-discipline, by the curtailment of all unnecessary consumption and by allocating a far greater proportion of our national income than we do at present to industrial investment. A huge, self-sufficient economy like that of the United States can to a far greater extent leave such matters to the free play of market forces. Britain, which must purchase so much of what it needs from abroad, is not in that fortunate position. Mistakes in these matters can in America produce a retardation in the rise of living standards; in Britain they can cost the nation its life. It is as yet too early to say whether these basic facts will be grasped in time

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by enough people, but whether the new myth is to be a truly vitalizing force depends on that realization.

At the moment there is a spate of discussion whether or no Britain is declining. Most of it does not seem to me particularly to the point, since nobody ever seems to define terms. If by declining one means that there has been, relatively speaking, a substantial lessening of Britain's material and economic power, then the thing is too obvious to be worth discussing—and I might add too unimportant. There is really nothing dreadful about a nation having to step down from the pedestal of world leadership. What matters is a nation's ability to adjust herself successfully to the new position. In the case of Britain, what matters is her ability to marry her dream to a successful adjustment between means and ends. That will be the index of her vitality—that, and one thing more.

I said earlier that in the long run Britain will only be able to solve her problems by rigid self-discipline. That, of course, unavoidably implies a whole host of government controls, and this means—at least over certain areas—some diminution of personal freedom. In such a relatively regimented society, will it be possible to maintain the essential freedoms intact? Personally, I have no doubts about the matter, for I saw those freedoms consistently preserved during the much more perilous years of the war. Even so, the question certainly may still be posed, for there is a long tradition that tends to a contrary answer. Yet it may well be reserved for Britain finally to give the lie to the statement of Dostoevski's Grand Inquisitor: "Men will understand at last that freedom and bread enough for all are inconceivable together." That may yet prove to be the arch lie of our time.

THE REDEFECTION CAMPAIGN

Fugitives from the Soviet

WILLIAM J. DONOVAN

ON APRIL 7, five Soviet sailors appeared at Idlewild International Airport with nineteen men, most of whom have since been identified as personnel of Russian diplomatic missions in the United States. These "diplomats" were grouped so that no outside access was possible to the sailors, who were on the first leg of their journey back behind the Iron Curtain. This dramatic scene added another chapter to the Communist redefection campaign, a campaign which has shaken refugee concentrations throughout the Western world. We now know that these sailors had been disturbed by unexpected visits from Soviet agents; that they had received letters from home written in a political vernacular that their families would not have composed; and that they had been threatened both personally and by fear of reprisals against their families.

It is certainly not the intention of our government to deprive any refugee of his right to leave the United States. The real question is whether the departure actually is voluntary. That is the question posed by the case of the Soviet seamen. They left without warning to their friends. Cherished souvenirs and personal belongings were abandoned. Their rooms were left with an appearance that suggested an abrupt departure. Once at the airport they were represented by Soviet diplomatic officials, the presence of whom precluded the possibility of objective questioning. The evidence points to coercion.

The subsequent action taken by both Congress and the State Department indicates that we have recognized the danger and are ready to take the measures that may be necessary. The ouster of the two Soviet UN officials and the warnings to the other satellite governments are clear reminders that the shield of diplomatic immunity can not be used as a sword.

THE U.S. has always represented freedom and sanctuary to the world's persecuted and oppressed. If that image is to be protected, we must study this Communist redefection campaign and meet its challenge boldly.

There are two and one-half million refugees in the West who have fled Communist oppression. Each individual is a living witness against the brutality and terror of Communist totalitarianism. In their National Committees and Governments-in-exile, refugee groups have taken energetic and effective measures of resistance to the Soviets. Their existence is a symbol of

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successful opposition. The Communists want to destroy the political and moral effectiveness of these refugee communities. Their goal is not so much to secure the return of large numbers of persons but rather to destroy their status and discredit future escapes. Each person who returns discourages the resolution needed behind the Iron Curtain for further escape. And most important, each redefection, voluntary or coerced, demoralizes, undermines and divides those refugees left behind.

THE SIGNIFICANCE attached by the Communists to redefection is illustrated by the range and intensity of their methods. Local conditions dictate whether blackmail or the nostalgic image of the homeland should be employed, whether the threat to family members left behind or the promise of political amnesty will be used, whether the bribe or the illusion of a better future should be offered. For instance, immediately after the Geneva Conference, Polish refugee intellectuals living in France received letters from Poland and visits from the Polish Consular staff urging a return home. They were told that although conditions in Poland were not perfect, they had improved. These agents asserted that the West had betrayed the refugees at Geneva by accepting the status quo and that the exiled community could no longer count on Western support. The refugee was told that he had the choice of an idle, useless and *friendless* life in the West or a constructive happy life in his native land, back among his own people.

The Communist approach is accomplished with remarkable knowledge of the personal histories, backgrounds and present circumstances of those they would victimize. Case history files hang over each refugee. With this knowledge, it is possible to understand the disquieting effect of a report that there have been eight thefts in southern Germany alone of personal files collected by voluntary agencies.

We are not certain what happens to these redefectors once they return behind the Iron Curtain. They are certainly used as propaganda tools in broadcasting and in sending letters. Past experience has shown that the returning escapee lives a brief public life and then disappears.

Since January 1, 1955, more than two thousand refugees, excluding East Germans, Poles from France, and Yugoslavs, have returned behind the Iron Curtain. But it is a mistake to assess the effectiveness of the Communist campaign, solely or even substantially, on the statistics of actual returns home. The redefection campaign is a segment, but an important segment, of the Communist program to weaken and divide the Western world.

WHY DO the Communists have any success at all? The question is not easily answered. Though improvement in living conditions for refugees would probably reduce the number of redefectors, this alone would not eliminate return. The total problem includes disillusion, despair, and the failure of human courage.

Once the barbed wire of the Iron Curtain has been surmounted, the refugee is often faced with the loneliness of an unfamiliar culture, a friendless community, and countless days of waiting. The refugee cannot escape the feeling of guilt and moral responsibility for the fate of family members left behind. As hope declines and despair and disillusion increase, the refugee's resistance to the Communist blandishments weakens. Life in America remains the dream of most refugees, but even this has unmarked pitfalls unless guidance and help in readjustment are available. The strained resources of the voluntary agencies have not allowed them to carry this important burden of effecting the full readjustment of the refugee to American life.

The Commission organized by the International Rescue Committee to study the problem of redefection has submitted detailed recommendations which the Government is carefully studying. In addition, the Commission has proposed the following: 1) Coordinate existing programs and equalize the burden of refugee care with other nations, especially those of first asylum; 2) speed the processing of refugee and escapee cases; 3) devise a program to strengthen refugee morale, which would include advice and counseling for at least one year after the refugee's resettlement.

Much of the action necessary to combat the Communist redefection campaign must be done on a political and economic level by government agencies. The individual citizen has his own role to play, however, through his participation in the work of those voluntary agencies which are involved in the humanitarian labor so urgently needed. The tragedy of redefection involves more than these five Soviet seamen and their compatriots who have been either attracted or coerced back. It is equally poignant for those who are left shaken and insecure but yet remain.

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THE SCREEN

DARING YOUNG MAN

FROM NOW on, whenever I hear "The Blue Danube" I shall probably think of "Trapeze" instead of what Strauss had in mind. Carol Reed's new movie uses the music with great effect. We hear the famous waltz played by a circus band at the beginning while the credits are being shown on the screen—credits to which we cannot pay too much attention because at the same time we are watching Burt Lancaster swinging from a trapeze high up in the circus tent, then doing a triple somersault, then plummeting in a fall that is broken only temporarily by the net.

The screenplay, written by James R. Webb and based on *The Killing Frost* by Max Catto, actually starts with the arrival of a young American acrobat (Tony Curtis) at the Circus Bouglione in Paris. Already a good aerialist, Tony is determined to have the once-great Burt, who is now only a circus rigger since his fall, teach him the difficult triple. Recognizing Tony's talent, the embittered Burt finally relents and becomes the young fellow's teacher; then, as time passes and both men become more and more enthusiastic with the trapeze act reaching perfection, Burt works as Tony's "catcher" and partner. Comes the *femme fatale*, Gina Lollobrigida, who knows a good thing when she sees it. She knows (as does everyone else around the circus) that the Lancaster-Curtis act is headed for the big time. Getting rid of the three tumblers who were in her act, donning her briefest tights, calculating Gina makes a play for Burt, who is attracted but wisely gives her the air. She convinces the unpleasantly oily proprietor of Circus Bouglione (Thomas Gomez) that she would add glamor to the Lancaster-Curtis act; then she goes to work on naive Tony, who thinks they're madly in love. But Gina is still aiming at Burt; and Tony surprises them together. Then comes the big climax during the circus show. The band is again playing "The Blue Danube." High up in the tent, on one side are Gina and Tony, and on the other side, swinging from a trapeze, is Burt, who is goading Tony into doing the triple—the stunt for which John Ringling North has joined the audience tonight. The whole circus vibrates with awe and excitement as the net is removed. "The Blue Danube" plays on.

Not even in his mystery thrillers or in that gem of a picture about the boy and the butler, "The Fallen Idol," has Director Carol Reed caught so well the atmosphere of place and mounting tension. Without forcing the usual cliches of circus movies, "Trapeze" gives the color and feel of circus life. Under Reed's direction, the large cast become real people with some depth of character. The thin plot unfortunately doesn't come up to the vivid characterizations, but perhaps the plot's skimpiness adds to the picture's realism. Certainly there is plenty of excitement from beginning to end. James Hill's production in DeLuxe Color is excellent, and, for a change, CinemaScope is employed to add to the effectiveness of the movement, and not just to show off some scenery. Director Reed manages to use the *whole* of the wide screen and still give us close-ups from time to time. And he has also succeeded in making a movie for adults that is more exciting than a three-ring circus.

CINEMASCOPE'S wide screen is also used effectively in many of the scenes of "Bhowani Junction," especially those mob scenes which convey the turmoil and confusion that prevailed in India during the late 1940's when the British were withdrawing from that country. Written for the screen by Sonya Levien and Ivan Moffat from John Master's novel, and filmed in Pakistan in Eastman Color, "Bhowani Junction" is fascinating as a semi-historical panorama of turbulent times. But when Director George Cukor gets down to specific cases, he spreads his interests too far. While the movie makes it clear that it deplores racial conflicts, it cannot make up its mind as to which characters it is backing. Its story is told in a long flashback (for no reason at all) by Stewart Granger, a British colonel who is leaving India for England. Its main character is played by Ava Gardner as an Anglo-Indian who doesn't know where she fits. She shifts her love from another confused, unhappy half-caste (expertly played by Bill Travers) to an Indian (Francis Matthews) whose mother is lined up with the Communists, and, finally, to the stalwart colonel who already has his hands full keeping order at this railroad center where everything seems to be completely disorganized. The complexities of the role prove too difficult for Miss Gardner, but she looks like a million dollars in the fancy pseudo-Indian costumes provided her. Audiences may not come away from "Bhowani Junction" much wiser about the Indian question, but they will see an exciting melodrama set in a realistic background of turbulence.

THERE ARE some lively thrills in store for anyone who sticks with "23 Paces to Baker Street" beyond the half-way point. In spite of its title, this is not a Sherlock Holmes thriller, but it is the kind of a mystery that the master detective would unravel through deduction. Van Johnson plays a blind playwright who overhears a conversation in a pub that sounds like a murder or kidnapping plot. Although impressed with his imagination, Scotland Yard is not moved into ac-

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tion by his story. So, helped by a former fiancée (Vera Miles) and his secretary-companion (Cecil Parker), Van wanders deeper and deeper into the maze started by the conversation in the pub until it seems as if the blind man will never see his way out. Nigel Balchin has written a good screenplay from Philip MacDonald's novel, *Warrant for X,* and Henry Hathaway has directed his good cast (Estelle Winwood, Patricia Laffan, Isobel Elsom and others) with emphasis on suspense and humor. At times, however, the piece moves too slowly, especially when Hathaway can't resist displaying the beauty of London in CinemaScope and DeLuxe Color.

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

COMMUNICATIONS

CHILDREN IN EAST HARLEM

New York, N.Y.

TO the Editors: East Harlem life has taken on its spring wildness. The sound of laughter and singing is winding through the air shafts, there are yelling children and mothers in profusion. Figures are appearing on the fire escapes, the streets whir with conversations, balls slam against the stoops, horse-drawn carts are rattling by loaded with bananas or huge potato sacks, little lemon-ice stands dot the streets, surrounded by clusters of eager children holding out warm pennies, and groups of our children can be seen back from a couple of hours on Ward's Island with dandelion flower bouquets for mother.

So we await summer, and the question, "When are we going to camp?" becomes more frequent and urgent. Last year, contributions from readers of The Commonweal made it possible for us to take scores of Puerto Rican and Negro children from our East Harlem neighborhood for free two-week vacations at the seashore. For most of them it was their first experience in the country, perhaps their first experience of childhood as most of us knew it. They had a chance to grow, unhampered by the pressures of life in the slums, nurtured by the constant sun and clear air, the soothing rhythm of the waves, the warmth of the sand, the wonder of sea life, the perfect shells, the whitened driftwood. They were shaded by grape vines and walked through fields of tall grass and wild flowers, feet bared and close to the earth. They knew the primitive life of childhood when the personality is formed and strengthened for its future battles.

When I think of the importance of these few days in the country, away from the depressing confinement of the city blocks, I am reminded of my own childhood and of that special time of the year when I could enter the quiet arches of the woods and see, rising from the low rambling vines, small clusters of wild violets against the earth. And I recall my joy when I could take a few, not meaning to spoil their carelessly planned arrangement. I would sit under a tree for hours listening to the rustling of the rabbits and birds, the small rushes of wind against newly sprung leaves, and touch the moist dewiness of the moss. These are small but precious experiences.

Last Christmas we went around to all the buildings where the children we work with live and gave them gifts of clothes and toys, again bought mostly with funds from readers of The Commonweal. As we climbed the dark stairs and smelled the familiar smells, felt the choking dampness of peeling plaster, and saw, shining through the darkness, the small faces smiling like lit candles, we thought how empty our hands really were with these toys and sweaters, the dolls and trains, because they are so trapped in this poverty. Their violets are the garbage dumps in the empty lots and their ocean spray the rush of opened fire hydrants when the temperature gets over ninety. There is no relief from the nagging of poverty, the sparse table, the ragged clothes, the jangled nerves of the breadearner who works in a hot factory all week but still can't make ends meet.

Last summer they had some release from this at camp. They made baskets and painted outdoors, picked berries and fruit, spent long afternoons swimming in the cool water. Sometimes at night we built fires on the beach and cooked dinner there; we went clamming and made huge potfuls of fragrant chowder. Rainy nights we had hot chocolate and cookies in bed before our ritual of goodnight prayers and songs. It was a good close family life that we all remember with nostalgia. We had many good laughs and some bickering, like a real family, and through the experience of living this way we were able to come closer to their problems and hopes.

For the children it was a time to remember, and they never stop talking about it. It was one bright holiday time to make up for the weeks of cold wind, the draughty halls aired by broken windows, the kerosene-heated rooms that smell of dank smoke, the meals when there is hardly enough to pass all the way around the table. For some it was a vacation from the shoeshine box and carrying heavy boxes of groceries up six flights to earn money for notebooks and an occasional movie. At camp they were masters of the sea and sky, riders of waves, dancers and dolphins, florists and fruit growers, cooks and clowns. We hope that readers of The Commonweal will help us to give them another season of childhood.

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OF NOTE

MODERN RELIGIOUS ART

WRITING in the May 17 issue of *The Catholic Messenger* (410-1/3 Brady Street, Davenport, Iowa), the Reverend E. M. Catich discusses religious art in contemporary culture. Excerpts from his article follow:

We may state as a fundamental principle that religious art must, above all, be theologically correct. This correctness excludes not only direct statement of theological error but, insofar as it is humanly possible, all statements which may unwittingly lead viewers into theological error.

The Church is the final arbiter on the theological qualities of any work of religious art. Her concern is theology. She uses art to help communicate theological truths. The artist composing a religious hymn or carving a crucifix is teaching theology; he is communicating religious ideas to those who hear and see his work. The Church, because of her sacred mission, is abidingly concerned with the kind of religious ideas these artists propagate, since religious art is, as it were, a minor branch of theology. The religious 'statement' in a work of art is always the final cause, the determining cause; the art itself is the material cause and, therefore, subordinate.

I have already pointed out some of the most gross errors in religious art, both past and present: excessively human portraits of Christ which minimize His divinity; excessively abstract symbols of Christ which deny His humanity; effeminate portraits of Christ which belie His virility and manhood; excessive realism and particularization of details which destroy, or at least attenuate, the symbolic function of sacred art and distract the viewer from the greater truths the symbols are meant to convey; preoccupation with historical-archeological problems and personal artistic excursions which are not central to religious truth.

In order, then, to arrive at sound norms and principles which will guide his work, the artist must know as much what errors to avoid as what habits to perfect. He must know, for example, why a painting of a Crucifixion or Resurrection scene which is scrupulously exact concerning the historical accidentals of first-century dress and clime is, theologically, less desirable than the same scene represented in contemporary terms, in terms, that is, of our own age and culture.

Christ's life, death and resurrection are, indeed, historical facts. Yet these facts are not ordinary history; they have an immediacy and relevancy for all souls in all ages. A religious picture which, by inordinate attention to the historical accidentals surrounding these facts, would relegate Christ and His Redemption to a certain period of history, runs the serious risk of leading present-day Christians into the belief that they are but detached and passive spectators of these truths. It is a dogma, for example, that our sins, in 1956, help crucify Christ. But it is difficult, indeed, to feel the force of this truth when we view Crucifixion scenes which, by freezing the meaning of the Crucifixion as a first-century event, encourage us to believe that the guilt belongs exclusively to the Jews and the Roman rulers and soldiers.

I suggest, therefore, that a basic principle of religious art is that we must express religious truths in contemporary terms; we must use the things proper to our own age. God chose to call us into existence in this age rather than another. For all of us now living, this is the very best age.

We cannot go back to any other age for a contemporary expression of Christ in art, not even to those earlier inspirations (Umbrian, Sienese, Medieval and early-Christian) which were authentic, which were truly peaks in the history of religious art. We may learn much from the *manner of operation* of those authentic artists; we may not imitate the *external expression* of those artists who were producing religious art well ordered to their time. . . .

I sometimes wonder whether the preference of some for Christ pictured as a merely historic figure, a stranger from far-away places living in a remote age may not reflect a type of spiritual escapism. Such a representation of Christ in art does not disturb us unduly; it provokes no embarrassing questions about our part in His Crucifixion. If, on the contrary, Christ is portrayed as a member of our household, and our city, a person of our land and language, we are thrust uncomfortably close to truths we perhaps would rather not examine for fear of their personal implications in our lives.

The function, then, of the religious artist of every age is to state the eternal truths of Christianity in new, fresh, acceptable terms accommodated to the true devotional needs of his particular audience. . . .

Earlier, I said that each age makes pictorial statements of Christ in terms of the ideal of its time. What is the ideal of our time? I cannot answer that question with any finality, at least not for some time. One reason is that we no longer have kings, epic heroes, emperors and other serviceable prototypes for the ideal.

Meanwhile, until we do have an ideal to serve as our artistic prototype, there is nothing to prevent religious artists from parting company with the sentimental abominations now prevalent in religious art. Images of the effeminate Christ, referred to earlier, confront us everywhere: in homes, schools, seminaries, hospitals, convents and churches. This is a serious problem demanding full and immediate attention. One of the first duties of Catholic artists is to restore to

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Christ His Manhood which has been stripped from Him in recent centuries.

In ages of sentimentality, it is a most serious obligation of the artist, I am convinced, to register his distaste for such sentimentality by producing works of art which will correct the error. In the case of the effeminate Christ inflicted upon the faithful, it is necessary to go for a time to a clearly masculine ideal until that wretched error is buried. In our time, one sign of manhood is trousers which, as garb for Christ, are a useful artistic device in the needful masculine-restoration process now demanded. Conversely, slacks for the Blessed Virgin would be inappropriate because repugnant to the idea of her sacred maternity. In the task of showing divine qualities in the image of Christ, the artist is, of course, confronted by formidable artistic difficulties. It is impossible to discuss this delicate problem in great detail here. We may note, however, some elementary premises. The artist must use those forms, lines, shapes and colors which, by unprejudiced artistic consent, symbolically suggest higher values. To suggest power, for example, the artist would not use weak, effeminate, soft, overly rounded lines or shapes, but rather more straight lines, verticals, horizontals, suggesting solidity and strength.

The clothes given to Christ should be neither too old nor too new. They should be a general type, acceptable to our time, to indicate that its Wearer is living among us, that He is a partner to our secrets, sorrows and joys; that He is one to Whom we can go with full confidence in the knowledge that He is sharing our lot.

There is no universal "Catholic style" in art. That is to say, there is no one permanent artistic expression of Christ, frozen for all time. Each piece of good Catholic art is a unique expression uttered by the Mystical Body, an expression most fitting for the time and place where it occurs.

If God did, in fact, withhold all graphic and literary records of Christ's physical features, there must have been a reason. The reason cannot be, as some might infer, that we are meant to have no pictures at all of Christ. We need religious images. It is true that some select souls, far advanced in virtue, and some philosophers can dispense with the usual symbols and pictorial images in arriving at divine truths. The great majority of people, however, must have pictures. As St. Thomas says: ". . . it is fitting that divine truths be expressed under the figure of less noble than nobler bodies. . . ."

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I have suggested, earlier, a possible reason why we have had no literal picturization of Christ: so that "each age and people could assimilate Christ as their ideal."

Could it [also] be that God in His infinite wisdom, withheld the pictorial, literal image of Christ from us in order to discourage that type of idolatry which suggests that some special national or racial group was favored and superior to all others? . . .

By taking from us the temptation to particularize on the features of the Redeemer, the Church is able to preach more effectively the truth of Jesus Who is "all things to all men." To limit the image of Christ to a particular ethnic or racial strain is to impede the unreserved acceptance of Christ by the great variety of ethnic and cultural groups in the world. Insisting that Christ's image be Latin because the Church is Roman is as much a blunder as demanding that the image be Jewish because He was born of a Jewish maiden into a Jewish people.

The Catholic Church is indeed catholic. She does not, and cannot, identify herself with any particular culture. While she molds cultures, she is above them. She cuts across centuries and remains true to her divine direction to commend herself to all cultures in all times.

This is crucial in these days of a shrinking world. The doctrines of white supremacy, Nordic ascendancy and superiority and kindred evils are diabolisms of the worst kind. Certainly, religious artists of all people should be on guard against unwittingly giving credence to these malicious myths. To project one kind of image patterned after a special physical and racial type as the "true Christ," is bigotry (either conscious or unconscious), injurious to the Faith and a contradiction of St. Paul who, inspired by the Holy Ghost, wrote:

> "With the Jews I lived like a Jew, to win the Jews; with those who keep the law, as one who keeps the law (though the law had no claim on me), to win those who kept the law; with those who are free of the law, like one free of the law . . to win those who were free from the law. With the scrupulous, I behaved myself like one who is scrupulous. I have been all things to all men to bring salvation to all." (I Cor. 9, 20-22.)

May we any longer say that a Mongolian Madonna with slanted eyes is wrong? May we object to Arctic natives making an Eskimo St. Joseph? What is the legitimate visual ideal of Christ for a normal, black native in Africa?

These are not academic questions. They are terribly important theologically, artistically, and, as we are beginning to see in our own country and throughout the world, culturally and socially. Their implications are enormously wide and deep.

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The Dramatic Clash of Great French Churchmen

THE ARCHBISHOP AND THE LADY: The Story of Fénelon and Madame Guyon. By Michael de la Bedoyere. Pantheon. $3.50.

By MARTIN TURNELL

COUNT Michael de la Bedoyere's new book is a study of the Quietist controversy in the seventeenth century. He describes Fénelon in his foreword as the "hero" of the book. This brings out the special nature of the controversy. It was not simply one of the most curious, it was also one of the most dramatic of the many controversies which divided the age. The protagonists in the drama were Fénelon, Archbishop of Cambrai, Bossuet, Bishop of Meaux, and Madame Guyon. Fénelon was known to his contemporaries as "the Swan of Cambrai" and Bossuet as "the Eagle of Meaux"; Mme. Guyon was "the Dove" who unwittingly precipitated the violent quarrel between the two prelates.

Fénelon, who is one of the most attractive of all the great seventeenth-century French churchmen, was born in 1651, the year before Bossuet's ordination, and came of an aristocratic but by no means prosperous family. He was ordained in 1675 and at once began to make a name for himself as a young *abbé* who was well looked on in Court circles. In 1689 he was appointed tutor to the Duke of Burgundy, the eldest son of the Dauphin, and the same year became Mme. de Maintenon's spiritual director. Four years later he was elected to the French Academy, and in 1695 was consecrated Archbishop of Cambrai. His elevation to the ducal see is said to have been the means of removing him from Court. If this was disgrace, observes one writer, it was a very well disguised disgrace. It remains true, however, that the new archbishop had ceased to be a Court favorite. The Quietist controversy had broken out in 1693. By associating himself with Mme. Guyon, Fénelon had embarked on a course which was to lead to his deprivation of the office of tutor to the Duke of Burgundy, to the condemnation of his *Maxims of the Saints* by the Holy See, and to a banishment which this time was not concealed.

Fénelon first met Mme. Guyon in 1688 when he was thirty-seven and she was forty. She already enjoyed considerable notoriety for her devotional practices, for her cult of "pure love," for a number of books on prayer including the celebrated *Moyen court,* and for her friendship with the Père La Combe who had been imprisoned on a charge of heresy. Count de la Bedoyere tells us that Fénelon was "entranced" by Mme. Guyon, and there is no doubt that she herself was captivated by his famous charm to which even the malicious Saint-Simon paid tribute.

It is extremely difficult to arrive at a balanced estimate of Mme. Guyon's character, but there is much to be said for the Abbé Bremond's view that she was a deeply spiritual woman whose troubles were nearly all caused by the lack of precision with which she expressed herself and which led to ill-founded charges of heresy. She was the sort of woman, who, without apparently having any vocation for the religious life, felt the need to occupy herself with religion. She was married off at the age of sixteen to a man who was many years older than herself. Her husband died when she was twenty-eight, leaving her free to pursue what was plainly her main interest. If her interest in religion had been confined to "good works" in the conventional sense she would scarcely have attracted much attention, and would have long since been forgotten. Her interest, however, lay in the mysteries of interior prayer. She propounded a method of mental prayer which, though intended primarily for an élite, was designed to lead to a spiritual revival by bringing new life to the religious formalism which was widespread in her time. Although she was operating in what must be regarded as a dangerous and controversial field, no great harm might have occurred if she had not also exercised an extraordinary fascination for the more spiritual and sensitive members of the clergy with whom she came into contact. Fénelon was not the first, but he was far and away the most illustrious of the priests who fell under her sway.

It is impossible at this distance of time to discover the precise nature of her attraction. Fénelon himself was at pains to emphasize that for him Mme. Guyon simply represented a fresh approach to God, and that the woman herself did not count. This is sufficient to explain the tenacity with which he defended what she stood for coupled with that indifference to the persecutions to which she was subjected which to Count de la Bedoyere savors of callousness. Although he tells his story well, he is much less successful in his attempts to expound the doctrinal issues involved and in his analysis of the more complex personalities who played a part in the drama. His explanation of Mme. Guyon's hold over Fénelon is anything but convincing: "She somehow polarized for him that unanalysed sea of spiritual yearning in which he wanted to find the answer to the heaped up and insoluble perplexities of life."

This is not analysis; it is sentimentality masquerading as analysis. It gives a very distorted view of the seventeenth-century mind and turns the great Fénelon, who in all the essentials of the Christian faith was a model of orthodoxy, into a victim of that *inquiétude* which is still immensely fashionable among contemporary French men of letters. He is on much firmer ground when he comes to deal with Bossuet who was not only a much less complex character, but whose strong Gallican leanings made him much less of an orthodox Catholic than Fénelon: "For Bossuet, mysticism was essentially a lamentable extravagance, a

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kind of spiritual failing tempting the odder saints, which threatened reason and history and consequently the primacy of ecclesiastical and secular institutions for the good government of mankind."

This goes a long way towards explaining why what might have been a minor heresy-hunt became first a national issue which divided the kingdom, and then an international issue which threatened to divide the Church. There were two sharply divided trends in the seventeenth century. One was the mundane, matter-of-fact, rationalizing tendency which crystallized in the philosophy of Descartes. The other was a mystical tendency which appealed to the subtler and more spiritual minds of the time. Among churchmen Bossuet was inevitably the champion of the first, and Fénelon the champion of the second of these tendencies. Yet the personality of Mme. Guyon remains the decisive factor. It was not simply that her religion of "pure love" was a threat to nearly all that Bossuet stood for, or even that she aroused an extraordinary sympathy and a no less extraordinary antipathy among the representatives of the two schools. In some unexplained way she acted as a catalytic agent. She brought the latent conflicts to the surface so that any form of moderation became impossible.

The closing stages of the affair—the appeal to the Holy See, the protagonists penning their treatises on mysticism, the Pope wringing his hands in despair over the amount those "Frenchmen" wrote, the ecclesiastical spies hurrying to Rome and lobbying the theological consultators, the ambiguous condemnation and Fénelon's dignified submission—all this makes fascinating reading and shows the author at his best. We are all "Féneloniens" since the Abbé Bremond's masterly *Apologie pour Fénelon,* but though Count de la Bedoyere makes no secret of his sympathies he repeatedly describes Bossuet as the greatest churchman of his day. Fénelon's greatness is not in doubt, but it is much more difficult to see in what Bossuet's greatness consists. No doubt he sincerely believed that the fate of the Church in France depended on the triumph of his own views, and felt that in this instance at any rate the end justified the means. The means were frankly shocking. They included deliberate misrepresentation and a gross breach of confidence if not downright lying. There remains the writer, the "classic" whose style is universally praised and who is firmly entrenched in the academic syllabuses. He was certainly a remarkable rhetorician, but one can hardly help wondering whether he was anything better, whether Bremond's "sublime journalist" was not something more than a joke.

A Victorian Cult of Love

THE ABODE OF LOVE. By Aubrey Menen. Scribner's. $3.50.

By GERALD WEALES

THE CHIEF virtue of Aubrey Menen's new novel is that it is genuinely funny. Any author who chooses to write a comedy about a nineteenth-century religious cult with a harem at its center exposes himself to the danger of becoming coy or cute. Mr. Menen avoids this cloying possibility. His comedy rises naturally from his conception of character and from the dramatic, or at least conversational, situations in which he places his figures. Certainly the best section of the book is the chapter in which he describes the rescue of shipwrecked Matthew Bunt from the island on which he has been two years a castaway. Captain Overton, the rescuing officer, has the good, English solidity of Daniel Defoe, having been fed on his Robinson Crusoe, and expects every self-respecting English castaway to share his predilections. In a question-and-answer exchange, Bunt slowly, reluctantly reveals that his only activity on the island, one which he worked at with Crusoe-like ingenuity, has been the furnishing and decoration of a cave brothel which he peopled with a stable of lovelies, constructed of rolls of cloth, gourds and coconut shells, of rope and gaudy signal flags.

Bunt's chagrin and shame, Overton's moral outrage, the amusement of the younger officers are sufficient to carry the story of Bunt's island paradise with a purity that is not consistent in the book; at other times the author intrudes to make comments of his own. Even in his intrusions, however, Mr. Menen is usually amusing because he uses the literary equivalent of the stage's "throw-away line." He does not dig the reader slyly in the ribs to prepare for whatever is coming; he simply, straight-facedly drops a line casually into the narrative, although some are less successful than this one about Cornelia, the first of the five Nottidge sisters to lose her virtue and the only one to do so this side of the marriage ceremony: "They concealed Cornelia's slip from the outside world but otherwise did not persecute her."

Although the advertising has stressed the fact that the novel is concerned with a Victorian English harem, the mechanics involved in the operation of the Abode of Love (which is based on an actual institution, just as most of the principal characters are based on real persons) fills only a very little of the space in the book. Mr. Menen's novel is really the story of how Henry James Prince, a minister with a taste for women in number, an understanding wife and a desire to get his hands on the money that the Nottidge sisters are to inherit, comes to establish a new religion. In Prince's new revelation, the elect among his followers are provided with automatic salvation (which allows him to dispense with church, turning the one on the estate that becomes the Abode of Love into a quite comfortable sitting room in which the elect take tea) and the assurance that they will not die (those whose faith is insufficient are quietly buried under the lawn and forgotten). The cardinal principle of the new religion, however, is that among the believers the car-

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nal and the spiritual become one and sin becomes an impossibility; thus Prince can take to bed, after a suitable ceremony, any of his female followers. Prince reaches his revelation, which allows the Nottidge girls to have him and not have him at once and which allows him to have their inheritance, only after a series of encounters—with Bunt's story of his island; with old Josiah Nottidge, whose one delight is watching money pervert the ordinary intentions of those around him; with Martin Larkspur, a con man of high finance, a representative of the boosterism of nineteenth-century English industrial progress.

Mr. Menen is a moralist, of course; the type is endemic among comic writers. He is not, however, satisfied that his story should directly or indirectly make comments on the conventional religion, morality and economics of the nineteenth century. He must, also, insist that Prince was basically at fault in his re-evaluation of right and wrong. For the most part, his insistence is in character with the rest of the book; it is another story of Matthew Bunt, again a funny one, that suggests that even Prince grew tired of his paradise. In only one paragraph, at the point where Prince is developing his new doctrine, does Mr. Menen step in to attempt to connect Prince's reversal of conventional right and wrong with more horrifying reversals of the twentieth century, the Nazis for instance. The paragraph is jarring, not because it is a sudden revelation of truth, but because it seems perverse in its forced comparison. It is impossible to take the Abode of Love that seriously, to find a direct line from Henry James Prince's country-house harem to Belsen. Perhaps Menen's real intention is embedded in this revelatory paragraph, but the novel would have been better without it. *The Abode of Love* is a funny book; any significance beyond the laughter should probably be left to the reader.

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Style and Quips

GIRL IN MAY. By Bruce Marshall. Houghton Mifflin. $3.

By PATRICIA DONEGAN

ACCORDING to Bruce Marshall, a friend suggested that he write a love story, and he did, and *Girl In May* was the result. The impression one gets from the book is that the suggestion was followed in a perfunctory manner with such little conviction that Mr. Marshall even feels moved to justify writing a love story by adding a kind of postscript which implies an intensity of personal struggle which, quite simply, doesn't exist in the story.

The innocent and youthful romance between a young student at St. Andrew's college in Scotland and the daughter of a gently idealistic Episcopalian priest is handled in a series of anecdotes which rather remind me of a number of independent clauses connected by a conjunction. The reader has a feeling Mr. Marshall comes to the end of his rope every once in a while

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and has to search rather diligently for something else to say.

Written as a flashback into the student days of Bishop Soutar, a Roman Catholic Bishop who is revisiting the scene of his undergraduate years, the first chapter lets the reader know that the young divinity student, Soutar, who is in love with young "Bumpie" Dunwoodie, will eventually be converted to the Roman Catholic faith. The reader then proceeds, in a state of mild suspense, through a lot of clever dialogue and considerable theological asides from Canon Dunwoodie, to the end of the book, without seeing one sign of struggle or even the shadow of a leaning toward a vocation in the main character, Soutar. In fact, it is in the father of "Bumpie," the Episcopalian priest, that the struggle, if any, takes place, and one suspects that the Canon might secretly be willing to trade Mrs. Dunwoodie and even "Bumpie" for an office in the Roman Catholic priesthood. However, young Soutar's thoughts seem mainly concerned with the problem of holding on to "Bumpie" and placating her father, which he succeeds in doing pretty well. At the end of the book, however, Mr. Marshall seems to feel a certain guilt about his main character, so in one magnificent leap he bridges the whole conflict which doesn't exist in his main character and announces that Soutar and Bumpie might have loved each other forever if the former hadn't been converted to the Roman Catholic faith.

About all there is to recommend *Girl in May* is Mr. Marshall's style, which, unsupported by conviction, even becomes a little cloying at times. There are a good many quips between Soutar and Bumpie who engage in a jargon reminiscent of a kind of reverse fractured French, in which "a broth of a boy" comes out *"un bouillabaisse d'un garçon."* Some of the author's favorite phrases will strike a reminiscent ring, certain ones recurring so frequently that they have some of the aspects of a trademark.

War on the Eastern Front

CROSS OF IRON. By Willi Heinrich. Bobbs-Merrill. $4.50.

By NEIL BRENNAN

HERR WILLI Heinrich's recently translated novel *The Cross of Iron* has as its hero the platoon leader Steiner whose men worship him; but Steiner violates his friends with his obscenity, smashes a cigarette into a man's face, and lashes his rear guard into the Russian forest with a bitter laugh. At battalion headquarters Steiner is a focal issue: Steiner will get through if anyone will, murmurs his company commander; I must meet this man Steiner, mutters his new battalion commander; Steiner once saved my life, I want him back, says the regimental commander. At this point an Ameri-

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A Modern Crusader

Esmond Klimeck, O.P.

The inspiration for this book, and indeed, for the whole of the author's life, lies in the words of St Bernard: 'When you follow Mary, you will not go astray: when you pray to her you will not despair: when you think of her, you will not err: when she holds you up you will not fall: when she protects you, you will not fear: when she leads you, you will not be fatigued: when she favours you, you will arrive safely.' Here indeed is the story of a modern crusader, his travels, adventures and battles in the service of our Lady. The story he has to tell lives and breathes of his own strong feeling and convictions and is as enthralling as any novel. Of particular topical interest is the long section he devotes to his experiences at Fatima.

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can reader almost expects to hear a defective machine gun start going pocketa-pocketa.

So one could parody the novel. Or get huffy about its brutal, romantic hero, for Mr. Heinrich has not kept a proper tension between his ideas and does seem at times to be letting savagery pass unchallenged and at times to be patting sulky romanticism on the back. But the novel as a whole does not. As the platoon assaults a women's mortar unit it becomes clear that Mr. Heinrich is neither a German Edgar Rice Burroughs nor a military Céline.

Steiner's courage, for one thing, is without the phony Tennysonian ring: it wavers from apathy to a wish for death, but straightens up at times brittle with fear. He is sadistic: before pulling the trigger on the sentries, he hisses so that they will whirl and see him. Before leaving a nurse, he punctures with a drunken leer the image of himself she wants to preserve. He wants to destroy illusions most of all. He is killer, egoist, psychopath, what you will; "crazy" is the word his men use.

But feeling that war is crazy and behind war, life, Steiner is really a mad moralist. Jonathan Swift lurks behind the justice he metes out to a German rapist, abandoning him to the fury of big-breasted Russians in filthy underwear. "Our century is changing everything," he says to the nurse. "What was thought bad in the past will be thought good . . . We're heading for a great age, sister; madness will be totalized and the insane asylums emptied." Cracks develop in his mask of cynicism, however. Starting to laugh after tommy-gunning a dozen sleeping Russians, his laughter drops him to the floor with a rictus of vomit.

In Steiner's world, obscenities are a flail against sentimentality; they are the mouth of the corpse set to scream at a sky of velvet blue. If Steiner dispatches his enemies coldly, and if he contemplates his mortal wound with a jest, he has yet the spirit of Coriolanus. (Rather than live vainly he would "drink a bottle of nitroglycerin and jump off the Jungfrau.") Needled by the Captain who wants him dead, he scales a Russian-held factory as if it were Annapurna, to capture a flag he knows to be meaningless. Only with deeds like these can he build his grotesque Taj Mahal to the memory of the fiancée gravity years ago drew out of his fatigued hands on a Swiss mountain, whom he swears never to forget, and then forgets.

"Steiner is a product of our times," says the Colonel, a man who "makes no bones about correcting Providence when the powers above bungle things." But the Colonel is wrong. Steiner does raise his gun to kill the Captain, but the masochist within or the shadow of a larger distant cross makes him forego, in his ostensibly godless world, the temptation to play God. This remains one of the better post-war novels. Those who like their battles served up on a map, moreover, will get an extra pleasure, for the prose is highly readable and the authentic tactical picture is always in focus. It is only the view beyond and the view within that flash into chaos.

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Then and Now

The Christian approach to the Hindu world has been greatly complicated by the increasing vehemence of anti-colonialism. It underlines the current importance of different methods.

Robert de Nobili, a young and high-born Italian Jesuit, having been assigned in 1605 to Madura, centre of a great university and of Brahmanistic culture for South India, adopted the method of Saint Paul, making himself a Brahman to gain the Brahmans. At the first, he cut himself off from association with the outside world and because of the odium in which all Christians were held by the Hindus, refrained for the time being from even using the name. Taking a mud hut in the Brahman quarter of the city, employing only Brahman servants, assuming the costume of a Brahman Sanyasi or penitent, he gave himself out as a priest of a superior order from the West. . . .

In this seclusion, following a life of the most severe asceticism, he devoted himself to a study of the Tamil and Telegu languages, later adding Sanskrit; and of the sacred literature and philosophy of the Brahman schools. He restricted himself to one scant meal a day from which all animal food was excluded; he slept on a straw mat spread on the mud floor of the hut and accommodating himself to Indian custom, he used neither desk, chair, nor other furniture. . . . This was the beginning of a movement that at one time seemed likely to spread over the whole of South India.

—Elizabeth S. Kite, The Commonweal, April 7, 1926.

It can hardly be a matter of surprise if the Church in India appears to many as a foreign religion, without any vital relation to India's own aspirations and ideals. But fortunately there have been other influences at work. There was above all the great enterprise of the Italian Jesuit Robert de Nobili. . . . There is no place for colonialism in any form in the East today. A missionary must come, not as the representative of a foreign power, but as a simple minister of the Gospel, to serve the needs of the people and to work in a humble spirit of brotherhood for the welfare of the country. His position is not unlike that of the ordinary Englishman in India today. Since the English left India and ceased to be its rulers, they have been welcomed back as private individuals, who are prepared to serve and not to rule. It is said that there have never been so many Englishmen in India as there are at the present day and that they have never met with so much friendship.

This is surely a lesson for the missionary. If he is prepared to give up all connection with foreign powers and to become an Indian among the Indians, working simply for the good of the Indian people, he may be sure of winning their respect and friendship.

—Bede Griffiths, The Commonweal, April 27, 1956

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